Disability through the lens of diversity: New thinking, new approaches

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Victorian education data

1,530 Victorian government schools

40,965 Teachers (incl. Principals)

650 EFT Student Support Services Officers

40% Psychologists
30% Speech Pathologists
16% Social Workers
14% Visiting Teachers
Education policy context

1980s and 1990s Victoria’s school reform journey began with the launch of *Schools of the Future*.

2000s saw the system move to a central focus on capacity-building for teaching and learning.

2012 release of *Towards Victoria as a Learning Community*. 

[Image of children and teachers engaged in learning activities]
### Data: How many “students with disabilities”?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count/Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>560,000 students in 1,530 government schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>56,000 to 80,000 students with disabilities under DDA/DSE</td>
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<td>23,000 students with moderate to severe needs under PSD</td>
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<tr>
<td>5,000+ students with an ASD</td>
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<td>• 80 specialist schools including 6 ASD specific</td>
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<td>• 10 to 15% of school population</td>
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<td>• At least one in every school</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 4% of school population</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Across 9 out of every 10 schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 1%+ of student population</td>
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Disability policy context: Disability within a paradigm of Diversity

- Our Australian schools today reflect the rich diversity of the communities we serve
- Disability sits within this diversity paradigm of schools for all
- All children and young people have the right to access and participate in a full, engaging and meaningful education on the same basis as their peers
- How schools can best approach this challenge and aspiration is through a personalised approach to each child's learning and support needs and strengths.
Personalised learning and support

**Skilled workforce**
- Disability specific professional learning for school staff
- Teacher training in targeted pedagogy and profiling (ABLES resource)
- Regional coaches, centres of excellence and state-wide resources
- Expert consultancy from peak disability organisations

**Effective school-family engagement**
- Needs profiling, learning and support plans, reporting and Student Support Groups
- Statewide resources to strengthen school-parent understanding and communication and parent voice
- Professional learning resources for managing concerns and complaints and building positive partnerships
- Parents and Community DSE e-learning modules

**Student learning and support**
- AusVELS/TL1AusVELS – curriculum, assessment and reporting
- Student Support Profile – identifying need and required adjustments
- Individual Learning Planning Standards/Guidelines
- Special Provision Support
- Student Online Case System
- Autism-Friendly Learning website - teaching and learning advice and guidance for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

**Data collection, reporting and accountability**
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
- Student reporting against learning outcomes and key data sets (e.g. AusVELS, NAPLAN, retention, attendance and school satisfaction surveys)
- School accountability processes

**Understanding of responsibilities and legislation**
- Disability Standards for Education e-learning modules
- Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability
- Extended guidelines, advice and resources
Why ASD Inclusion Support Programs?

- Move beyond individual, targeted, deficit-based funding approach
- Involve whole school community
- Build workforce capacity
- Strengthen range of provision
- Increase engagement and student outcomes
Purpose

Specialised provision in local neighbourhood schools to improve support for students with an ASD

- strengthening a whole school culture of inclusion, and valuing the individual
- acknowledging the unique needs of students and modifying curriculum and pedagogy to support them
- increasing the skills, knowledge and capacity of all staff to support students with an ASD
- providing additional support and expertise to support the school community
Locations
Structure

The participating schools in 2010-2014 received the following supports:

• Inclusion Support Coordinator’s salary
• action research project support from Monash University
• establishment and resources grants
• technology grants
• training/professional learning grants
• scholarships to the Autism Teaching Institute
• termly learning and sharing opportunities
The Inclusion Support Coordinator

Understanding of responsibilities and legislation

Skilled workforce

Student learning and support

Data collection, reporting and accountability

Effective school-family engagement

The Inclusion Support Coordinator

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Victoria
The Inclusion Support Coordinator

Three main areas of capacity building responsibility within the school:

1. To support teachers to maximise the learning, participation and engagement of students with an ASD in the school
2. To provide professional development and support to teachers and other relevant staff across the school to meet the specialised learning needs and inclusion of students with an ASD in classes
3. To support the school to work in partnership with families/carers and communities

- This position was funded at 1.0 EFT for the first 2 years.
- The extension of the MSSD created the opportunity to do things differently:
  - focused on establishing deeper knowledge
  - schools beginning to develop an independent resourcing approach
What schools did!

**strengthening a whole school culture of inclusion, and valuing the individual**

Whole staff completing the Disability Standards for Education elearning modules

Arranging for students to participate in Supporting Differences peer support sessions

**acknowledging the unique needs of students and modifying curriculum and pedagogy to support them**

Targeting their provision to meet the needs of girls

Providing career skills and support earlier for students with an ASD

Using Information Technology (IT) to engage and build confidence of students with an ASD
What schools did!

Increasing the skills, knowledge and capacity of all staff to support students with an ASD

- Prioritising the acquisition of additional ASD expertise
- Whole staff completing the Inclusion Online ASD modules
- Education teams (Teachers and Education support staff together) learning opportunities

Providing additional support and expertise to support the school community

- Student re-design of the “School Beliefs”
- Coaching and guidance for other schools
- Parent engagement opportunities
An evaluation

Deppeler and Sharma of Monash University conducted an evaluation process of the ISPs

**Measures taken from:**
- parents of students with an ASD
- teachers
- Inclusion Support Coordinators and;
- principals

**Results showed:**
All groups increased level of satisfaction with:
- student learning, participation and social engagement;
- additional support available to them
- teachers reported greater efficacy in working with students with an ASD
What did we learn?

- Schools benefitted from innovative model of resourcing and support
- Different paths lead to the same goals
- Principal/leadership support is crucial
- Context influences outcomes
**Possible future directions**

- How can we allow for different contexts without sacrificing program fidelity?
- How can external experts be best utilised?
- What do teachers need to understand about Evidence Based Practice in order to implement it?
- Did the approach really deliver “inclusion”?  
- How could it be applied in the context of diversity?
- How can we systemically lead and support effective change processes?
- What would be required to upscale this approach?
- How can we share the learnings with all schools?
Thank you!

Autism-friendly Learning